

checks." In fact, they believe a family of five should have to earn \$350,000 before the spigot of government money would stop entirely.

Socialism for rich people. That is what Speaker PELOSI and Senator SANDERS have sketched out. A terrible way to help those who need it, and experts across the political spectrum agree.

The liberal editors of the Washington Post have blasted so-called progressives demanding a nontargeted giveaway that would give "huge amounts" to "perfectly comfortable families."

Larry Summers, who ran the Treasury Department for President Clinton and the National Economic Council for President Obama, says there is "no good economic argument" for more nontargeted checks with no linkage to need.

The liberal New York Times reported this morning that a majority of the households that get nontargeted checks do not end up spending them on urgent needs but rather just add it to their savings. "We know where the pockets of need are," said one economist, and "putting [money] there would be a much more efficient use."

Fortunately, though some of our colleagues seem to have forgotten, that is exactly what we did only a week ago. It has been less than 5 days since President Trump signed into law another historic bipartisan rescue package targeted to Americans who actually need the help.

We passed an entire second round of PPP loans to save small business jobs, targeted to the hardest hit. We renewed multiple kinds of additional benefits for unemployed workers, including an extra \$300 supplement every week. There are billions for targeted food assistance, billions for targeted rental assistance, and many billions of dollars for vaccine distribution so we can finally beat this virus and reopen the economy in full.

These are the kinds of targeted emergency programs that directly help the most vulnerable, and we just poured almost another trillion dollars into them, less than 5 days ago, along with more direct checks that are already arriving in households' accounts. That is what we did just 5 days ago.

This crisis has not affected everyone equally. The data show that many upper middle-class Americans have kept their jobs, worked remotely, and remained totally financially comfortable. On the other hand, some of our fellow citizens had their entire existence turned upside down and continue to suffer terribly.

We do not need to let the Speaker of the House do socialism for rich people in order to help those who need help. Our duty, both to struggling Americans and to taxpayers, is to focus on targeted relief that will have the maximum impact and help the people who need it the most. That is what the experts say we should do. That is where there is broad bipartisan support, and

that is exactly what we did less than 1 week ago, when nearly \$900 billion in more targeted relief was signed into law for our people.

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 9051

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate today meets for a rare New Year's Eve session for one reason and one reason only: The Republican leader has refused to allow us to vote on legislation to provide the American people \$2,000 checks. He has twice objected to my requests to set a time for a vote on the measure, claiming yesterday that direct stimulus checks were "poorly targeted," bemoaning the idea that some of these checks might go into "the hands of Democrats' rich friends who don't need the help." Senator TOOMEY said much the same thing.

Well, funny, I don't remember the Republican leader and Senator TOOMEY complaining about how a \$2 trillion across-the-board corporate tax cut was "poorly targeted" because some large companies didn't need the help. No, when corporations get a blanket tax break, that is fine by the Republican majority. When the average American gets a little help from their government, it is "poorly targeted."

I hope that every American heard the objections by these Republican Senators. I hope every American who has their water or heat or electricity shut off or had eviction notices stapled on top of one another to their door or had to choose which meal to skip on a given day—I hope they all heard the reason they will not receive \$2,000 checks is because Leader MCCONNELL thinks it could wind up in the hands of "Democrats' rich friends."

Let's be very clear. There is one way and only one way to pass \$2,000 checks before the end of the year, and that is to pass the House bill. It is the only way to get the American people the \$2,000 checks they need and deserve.

The House is gone for the session. Any modification or addition to the House bill can't become law. Either the Senate takes up and passes the House bill or struggling Americans will not get \$2,000 checks during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Leader MCCONNELL knows this. So he has said that the Senate can only vote on a bill that combines the checks with other unrelated partisan policies: a repeal of section 230 and an investigation into the President's dishonest and bogus claims of election fraud.

The Republican leader claims that President Trump insists that all three issues must be addressed in one bill, but, of course, the President has made

no such demand. President Trump couldn't care less about how the bills are packaged in Congress.

So the Republican leader has invented an excuse to prevent a clean, up-or-down, yes-or-no vote on \$2,000 checks from coming to the floor. This maneuver to combine all three issues is intended to kill the possibility of \$2,000 checks ever becoming law.

Just to prove it, let me make this offer to the Republican majority. We are willing to vote on the other issues that President Trump mentioned—all the issues the Republican leader says must be addressed—so long as we vote on them separately. That way, \$2,000 checks could become law, and we could debate all the President's supposed concerns.

We can vote on setting up a commission to look at the President's roundly rejected claims of voter fraud. We would also have the commission look at voter suppression and gerrymandering. That is completely unrelated to helping Americans pay their bills, but we are willing to take a look at the whole picture. Just give us a vote on the House-passed bill so we can get help now for people who desperately need it.

Heck, we can also have a vote on repealing 230. We can do it today. We will use Leader MCCONNELL's exact language. He wouldn't agree to that because he knows his caucus wouldn't actually support such an act. Unlike the President, some Members of this body understand what 230 means. They understand that section 230, which certainly needs change, actually enables the President to spew his lies.

We all know the 117th Congress will have to take a close look at the relationship between liability and reckless speech on the internet. But if Leader MCCONNELL wants a vote on these issues, we are here for it. Just give us a vote on the House-passed bill, and we can vote on whatever rightwing conspiracy theory you would like.

We can even vote to set up a special blue-ribbon commission to determine whether Georgia's secretary of State has a brother named Ron, if that would make our Republican friends happy.

Just don't let these conspiracy theories and Presidential fantasies get in the way of helping actual people—people whose livelihoods have been torn apart by this pandemic, people whose lives have been torn apart by the administration's mismanagement of this pandemic, people who need just a little direct assistance.

The President's term, thankfully, will end in 20 days. It is a term that has been marked by hate and division and turmoil. He has so far used his term to enrich himself and the wealthy.

Let's close out the term on a good note. For once, he wants to help regular people, to give Americans a leg up. Let's allow him to do that.

We have a chance at the end of this painful year to give Americans a reason to have some hope in 2021. The only

thing standing in the way is the Republican Senate majority. In a moment, I will, once again, ask consent that the Senate set a time for a vote on the House bill to provide \$2,000 checks to the American people. Remember, the Democrats are willing to vote on all of the other issues that the Republicans say the President supposedly cares about. Just let us vote on a clean bill with the \$2,000 checks.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 645, H.R. 9051, a bill to increase the recovery rebate amounts to \$2,000 for individuals; that the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage; and that if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021—VETO—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the veto message on H.R. 6395, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message, a bill (H.R. 6395) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 9051 AND H.R. 6395

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me briefly respond to some of the points that Majority Leader MCCONNELL has made, to his inaccurate statements.

Now, I am delighted that, after years of talking on the floor of the Senate about socialism for the rich, apparently, that has gotten across to my Republican friends. Of course, that is what we do every single day. That is why we have the incredible level of income and wealth inequality that exists in this country, because, decade after decade, we have used this body to provide massive tax breaks to the rich and

provide corporate welfare to corporations that don't need it. That is socialism for the rich. The majority leader is right, but let's talk about, in fact, what is in this bill.

According to the Tax Policy Center, fewer than 1 percent of the benefits of the direct payments—that is the \$2,000 per working-class adult that Senator SCHUMER and I are talking about—would go to the top 5 percent of Americans. Virtually nothing would go to the very, very rich. The overwhelming majority of those funds would go to the middle class, the working class, low-income people, who in the midst of this pandemic are in desperate economic condition.

Again, I am delighted to hear the majority leader talking about socialism for the rich, and I hope we will continue that discussion in the next session. Let me talk about the socialism for the rich that the majority leader is enthusiastically supportive of as the majority leader helped to lead this body to pass Trump's tax bill.

Now, do you want to talk about socialism for the rich, Mr. Majority Leader?

Under that bill, Charles Koch—one of the very richest people in America, who has a net worth of \$113 billion—received a \$1.4 billion tax break.

Mr. Majority Leader, that sounds, to me, like socialism for the rich. Ah, but that is not all.

In Nevada, you have a gentleman named Sheldon Adelson, who is a major contributor to the Republican Party and a big funder for Donald Trump. Under that same tax bill led by the majority leader, Sheldon Adelson received a \$560 million tax break. A guy who is worth \$34 billion desperately needed that tax break of \$560 million.

Do you want more tax breaks for the rich? Do you want to talk about socialism for the rich?

Senator MCCONNELL had no problem giving a \$104 million tax refund to Amazon over the past 3 years despite the fact that the company made \$30 billion in profits. So the argument that this bill, in any significant way, benefits the rich is just not accurate, but let us talk about whom this bill does benefit.

This bill benefits tens of millions of Americans who, as a result of this pandemic, have lost their jobs and have lost their incomes. Some, in fact, have lost their lives. These are people who are going hungry today. We are seeing today a recordbreaking level of hunger in America—the richest country in the history of the world. All over this country—and I receive emails from people all over this country—people are frightened to death that they are going to be evicted from their homes. Think about what a \$4,000 check or a \$5,000 check would mean to those struggling families—husband, wife, kids. In fact, let me give you an example.

This is a problem taking place all over this country. It is taking place in Vermont. It is taking place in Senator

SCHUMER's State. It is taking place in Kentucky. In fact, the State of Kentucky—a very beautiful State; I have had the pleasure of being there a number of times—a beautiful State—is the State in which 10 out of the 25 poorest counties in America exist. I am sure Senator MCCONNELL is aware that, throughout his State, you have thousands and tens of thousands of people living in economic desperation. I am talking about counties where 30 to 40 percent of people are living in poverty and where many thousands of residents are trying to survive on less than \$20,000 a year.

I am just using Kentucky as an example because that is the State Senator MCCONNELL represents, but it is true all over this country.

In Kentucky, over 22 percent of the children are living in poverty. Do you think they might need a little bit of help?

In the State of Kentucky, more than 190,000 workers are making extremely low wages, and over a half a million people earn less than \$15 an hour. Somebody might want to ask those people what a \$2,000 check per adult would mean. I am talking about Kentucky, and I will never forget this because I visited Kentucky and talked to some of the people there. Kentucky has suffered from a particular opioid crisis. I will never forget talking to a football coach who told me that a bunch of the kids on his football team were living with their grandparents or on couches because of the opioid epidemic.

In other words, the people in Kentucky, the people in New York, and the people in Vermont are hurting. They need help.

So I say today to Senator MCCONNELL, the leader here, let us address the horrendous economic crisis facing tens of millions of Americans.

The pandemic today is worse than it has ever been. Hopefully, hopefully, the vaccine will make a profound difference, but, right now, people are hurting, and they are looking to this institution. They are looking to Congress. The House did the right thing. They are now looking to the Senate. They are looking to Senator MCCONNELL.

After all is said and done and after all of the legalese—and I am going to be introducing some legalese in a moment—it comes down to one thing: Senator MCCONNELL disagrees with the proposal that Senator SCHUMER and I are making. I got it. That is fine. This is a democracy. He has the right to his point of view. I would love to have the debate on the floor with Senator MCCONNELL about this legislation. All that we are asking is to give us the opportunity to vote up or down on whether or not working families in this country should be able to receive a \$2,000 check. Senator MCCONNELL disagrees.

Come to the floor. Tell us why you disagree. Then we will do what this institution is supposed to do. We will have a vote.